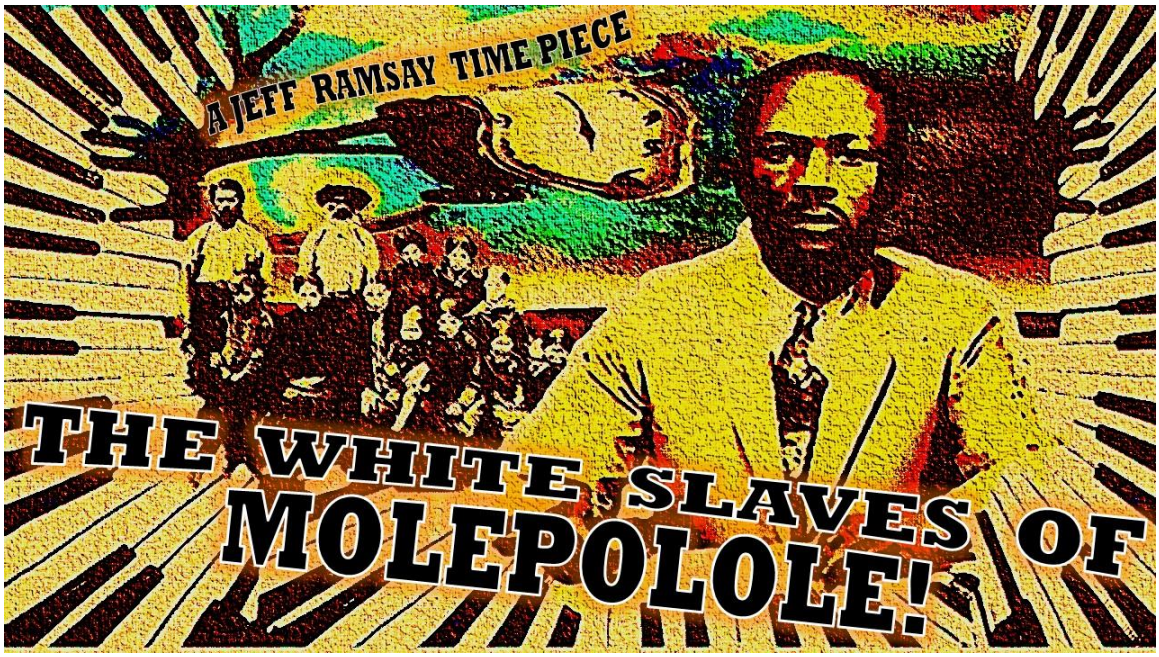

"THE WHITE SLAVES OF MOLEPOLOLE" – BLACK PERIL TALES AND THE AMBIGUITIES OF RACIAL AUTHORITY IN COLONIAL BOTSWANA by JEFF RAMSAY[1]

Introduction

"I wonder if there is in the world any more extraordinary story than the white slaves of Molepolole. Molepolole is a native kraal in the desert where Chief Sebele rules with his witchdoctors and advisors over a huge reserve set aside for the Bakwena natives. Native law is paramount in this reserve." – W.J. Makin, 1929[2]

Throughout its eighty-one years of existence, the Bechuanaland Protectorate was a territory ruled by white foreigners, whose subjects lived in the shadow of white settler-ruled neighbours. White supremacy was an inexorable context for the conduct of economic, social, and political relations. Notwithstanding this hegemonic reality interaction between indigenous Africans and European settlers in the Protectorate's Tribal Reserves was shaped by contradictory tendencies toward social engagement and segregation, cooperation, and conflict.

At times these intracommunal ambiguities served as a lightning rod for expressions of obsessive fear on the part of white segregationists in the region about the fragility of the colonial colour bar against the backdrop of their 'black peril', Afrikaans *'swart gevaar',* pathologies. In the Southern

African context these two terms have been narrowly defined as episodes of twentieth-century colonial settler hysteria at the prospect of black men being attracted to have sexual relations with white women. They are here more broadly understood as a marker for wider sustained fears about the fragility of white minority control. As reflected in literature and alarmist media, surges in black peril anxiety tended to coincide with challenging events such as the 1896 Chimurenga in Zimbabwe, the 1906 Bambatha Rebellion in Kwazulu-Natal, and social transformation arising from the World Wars.[3]

The best known Botswana-associated example of the black peril trope was the global controversy that followed Seretse Khama's 1948 marriage to Ruth Williams, which has been the focus of films as well as an extensive literature, including associated fiction.[4] Earlier, in 1933, the British Empire's racial hierarchy had been shaken by the Bangwato regent Tshekedi Khama's trial and alleged flogging of a young white man named Phinehas McIntosh.[5] Less remembered is the story of the "White Slaves of Molepolole" whose reportedly fallen status was the subject of recurring newspaper headlines in the 1920s.

Perhaps nowhere were ambiguities within the intersectional nexus between race and power in colonial Botswana more evident during the interwar years than at the Molepolole, the principal centre of the Bakwena *morafe* or tribal community. There, the existence of small numbers of whites or Europeans living in partial compliance with Sekwena customary law became the subject of official concern, as well as sensationalised press accounts. The roots of this phenomenon can be traced to the pre-colonial settlement of whites, as well as Coloured or mixed-race people in Kweneng during the reign of Kgosi Sechele I (1833-92). Most of these settlers were 'Maburu', that is Boer (white Afrikaner) blacksmiths who found opportunities servicing the ox-wagon trade. In this respect, there is little evidence for the popular assumption of a direct link between Boer settlement in Southern Botswana and the Dorsland (Thirstland) Treks that passed through northern Botswana in the 1870s.

Over time, some of the white settlers integrated, partly or wholly, into the affairs of the *morafe*, while others continued to reside as foreigners under the Kgosi's protection. By 1880, children of the modest Boer, along with the mixed-race populations at Molepolole, attended the local mission school alongside Bakwena.[6] Challenged by the resulting social engagement, the resident British missionary's wife, Elizabeth Price, noted in her diary that

she did not want her "little ones" to associate too closely with either the Boers or "Natives" in the village.[7]

While interracial marriage was never the norm in Molepolole, notable examples existed. Beginning in the 1850s, a handful of European traders married African brides following customary law procedure, e.g., the paying of bridewealth (*bogadi),* while at least one Mokwena had a Boer bride.[8] Here it may be noted that while some mixed-race Bakwena were the children of both marital and out-of-wedlock unions, others were part of a largely endogamous community settled in the Mokgopetsane section of the village, who were often locally referred to as “Masatedi”.[9]

The Imposition of Racial Authority

The legal, as opposed to social, separation of whites and blacks in Botswana was an early consequence of Britain's unilateral declaration of its "Protectorate" in 1885. The resulting colonial occupation was justified by the Foreign Jurisdictions Act, a legal instrument by which the British imperialists claimed the right to intervene in the affairs of ‘barbarous and semi-barbarous countries’ on behalf of their own citizens. After protracted discussions with the British General Charles Warren, who had been tasked with informing the Bakwena of the new order, Kgosi Sechele had reluctantly conceded that:

“Concerning the laws which shall be established in my country, I wish to rule among my own people according to custom but give to the Queen to rule among white people wherever they are.”[10]

Sechele’s son, Kgosi Sebele I, subsequently interpreted the above as meaning that the Asians, Boers, and Coloureds already living under Sekwena law were not the British Queen’s subjects and therefore remained under his authority. This view was consistent with an awkward June 1890 opinion by the British High Commissioner for Southern Africa's legal advisor, William Schreiner, which had noted that the 1885 agreements by Gaseitsiwe and Khama, as well as Sechele with the Queen “do not per se convey to the Crown any legal jurisdiction within the territories of those Chiefs.”[11]

In an attempt to clarify his dominion over all whites, on January 10, 1891, the then High Commissioner, Lord Loch, issued a Proclamation, whose section 10 stated:

"No suit, action, or proceeding whatsoever to which a person of European birth or descent shall be a party, either as plaintiff or complainant or as a defendant or accused person, shall be adjudicated upon by any Native Chief, save by consent of all parties concerned."

To reinforce the above, the British government affirmed its full authority over the Protectorate and all of its inhabitants in a February 1891 legal memorandum drafted by John Bramston, an Australian barrister then serving as an Assistant Under-Secretary of State in the Colonial Office.[12] This landmark document entitled "Memorandum as to the Jurisdiction and Administrative Powers of a European State holding Protectorates in Africa" provided the legal framework not only for the subsequent seven decades of colonial rule in Bechuanaland but also for other British African Protectorates. In the Memorandum, Bechuanaland was specifically defined as:

"An uncivilized territory to which Europeans resort in greater or less numbers, and where, inasmuch as the native rulers of the territory are incapable of maintaining peace, order and good government among Europeans, the protecting Power maintains courts, police and other institutions for the control, safety, and benefit of its own subjects and of the natives."

Bramston further argued that sovereignty in "an uncivilized African territory" could be "exercised by the same methods as if the ruler had ceded his whole country to her Majesty." He based this conclusion on the Foreign Jurisdictions Act's provision allowing Her Majesty's Government to control its subjects in "uncivilized" foreign territories. Maintaining that "sovereignty was indivisible", he argued that Britain "as a civilised power" thus had the right to undertake any measures that it deemed necessary to protect the interests of whites residing in Botswana and other "uncivilised territories." British "protection" was thus legally defined not as a defence of Batswana from the potential threat of white settlers but rather as an imperial intervention to uphold white racial supremacy over Batswana.[13]

The primary motive for Bramston's Memorandum had been the British Colonial Office's determination to uphold the 1889 Royal Charter that, over the legal objections of local dikgosi, granted concessionary rights in the Protectorate to Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company (BSACo).

London's acceptance of Bramston's conclusions resulted in a May 1891 Order-in-Council, which granted the British High Commissioner or "Tautona" ("Big Lion") as he came to be known to Batswana, in the name of the "Great White Queen" Victoria or "*Mmamosadinyana"*, absolute power to rule by proclamation for "the administration of justice, the raising of revenue and generally for the peace, order and good government of all persons within this order, including the prohibition of acts tending to disturb the peace." [14]

As "British Protected Persons" Batswana were thereafter denied the right to legally challenge the office of the High Commissioner's actions. This included its power, as formally asserted in 1907, to detain and/or banish persons for indefinite periods without the benefit of *habeas corpus* much less trial.[15] In other words, blacks had virtually no civil rights. Europeans and Asians generally enjoyed the legal status of British subjects. The position of mixed-race individuals was contested and dependent on their circumstances, with the children of Protected Persons being generally denied legal protections.[16]

Empowered by the new Order, in October 1891 Bechuanaland's Administrator Sir Sidney "Morena Maaka" Shippard imposed licensing fees on the traders. His appointment as the area's resident overlord had been based on his intimate association with Rhodes and his company.[17]

During the same month, William Surmon was appointed as Shippard's Deputy and stationed at Gaberones Camp (Gaborone), which was then garrisoned by the "K" Troop of the paramilitary Bechuanaland Border Police (BBP). This development had been specifically conceived "with the view of keeping in check the somewhat turbulent Chiefs Linchwe and Sebele."[18] Detailed plans had by then already been drafted for potential military operations by K Troop and other units to subdue such perceived potential trouble spots as Kanye and Moshupa, as well as Mochudi and Molepolole.[19]

When the dikgosi in the southern Protectorate questioned Shippard's decree, they were informed that they had no say in the matter. Despite this rebuke,

the Bakwena by then effectively led by Sebele on behalf of his ailing father Sechele decided to forbid Asian and Boer merchants operating in Kweneng from paying the fees.[20]

In February 1892 Surmon sent his police into Molepolole to force the Kweneng traders to pay their fees. But after they closed one Asian shop for non-payment, Sebele had it reopened. Thereafter two troopers who tried to collect from a Boer trader were stopped by Bakwena and escorted to Kgosing, the Royal kgotla. There Sebele reportedly informed the police that he:

"...refused to allow anyone trading on his ground to pay any licence whatever; he was the man to whom licences had to be paid, not the English government."[21]

Shippard responded by calling for tough action:

"I am of the opinion that the matter is too serious to be safely treated as a mere case of obstructing the police in the performance of their duties... It appears to me beyond doubt that this case is regarded by the other Chiefs, and the natives generally in the Southern Protectorate, as a test case, and any further attempt to collect licences or exact payment of fine, will be resisted. I should deprecate any threats or demands which we might not be prepared immediately to enforce...Towards this end, I think the first step should be to come to an understanding with Khama and obtain his promise of assistance in the event of trouble arising in the Southern Protectorate. In any case, and whether annexation is decided or not, it appears to me to be necessary to make immediate preparations for coercive measures."

Tautona Loch agreed, authorising preparations for an assault on Molepolole, including overtures to the Bangwato for assistance. The latter contingency was seen as helpful should, as Shippard predicted, the neighbouring Bakgatla, Bangwaketse, and Batlokwa join the Bakwena in armed an uprising. The Bakwena, however, had no desire to play into Morena Maaka's hands by seeking what would have been a hopeless confrontation. At a *letsholo* meeting, they agreed to only take up arms if attacked. Sebele then met with Surmon and eventually agreed to back down by donating ten cattle to the Gaberones Camp as a sign of his "friendship", with the added message:

"I do not like to be taught how to rule my own people. If I am taught according to other people's ideas, I will only make mistakes. My ancestors kept their villages in good order without acting under the compulsion of others. Friendship does not mean giving laws to another. Friendship is to advise each other."[22]

For his part, Surmon chose the path of mutual face saving by labelling Sebele's present as a fine thereby closing the case. To Shippard's frustration, his superiors in London welcomed the arrangement, further agreeing to meet Sebele's objections halfway by instructing that in the future the Tautona should only impose fees "with the consent of the Chiefs".[23] A few months later Sebele was granted an audience to place his grievances before Lord Loch at Cape Town. On his decision to meet with Sebele, Loch observed:

"In view of the difficulty which had recently occurred at Molepolole, I considered it desirable that his [Sebele I's] request should be complied with so that he might have the opportunity of realising the differences between European and Native civilisation and that the power of the former might impress upon him to such an extent as would probably obviate the chance of his again acting in a manner likely to endanger the peace of the Protectorate."[24]

Before his audience with the Tautona, the Bakwena Kgosi was thus given an extensive tour of Simonstown naval base. Thereafter, during the meeting, Sebele was bluntly informed by Loch that "all Europeans whether English or Dutch are under me." There was, however, a further understanding that the Mokwena could still exercise some of his traditional authority over local traders by charging fees for their use of the land and natural resources within Kweneng.[25]

Notwithstanding Loch's concession, Sebele hired a well known Johannesburg lawyer, Charles Leonard QC, to uphold his claim that he, not the British Queen, remained Kweneng's "sovereign of the soil". The latter claim was a direct challenge to the 1889 Royal Charter that awarded monopoly rights within Botswana to BSACo. It was based on this claim that Sebele and other dikgosi continued to collect rental fees for the use of land and such resources as timber after the 1899 demarcation of the "Tribal Reserves."

Trading Places

The 1892 imposition of colonial licensing and credit restrictions assured that during the colonial era retail commerce remained almost exclusively in the hands of whites or, to a lesser extent, Asians (who were nonetheless limited in their enterprise by additional colonial restrictions). Africans, including multiple generations of the mixed-race children of locally married white traders, were effectively prevented from going into business for themselves. The legacy of this commercial colour bar has haunted post-colonial discussions of citizen empowerment.

Colonial rule was more generally accompanied by the imposition of racial segregation and subordination in the political and social as well as economic spheres. In the Northeast, Southeast, Ghanzi, and Tuli Block areas, this process resulted in the hegemony of white settler interests. The same could also be said of the railway strip. When travelling by train dikgosi and other prominent Africans had to apply for special passes to sit in the second-class compartment. Otherwise, all Africans were restricted to the third and fourth classes.

But, inside the Reserves dikgosi were still able to exercise a degree of control through their influence over their subjects as well as their residual authority to collect rent and impose user fees. Those traders, such as Richard "Montshiwa" Rowland in Gangwaketse and Max "Raphalane" Hirschfeldt in Kweneng who worked closely with dikgosi thrived, while others who did not, like Paul Jousse in Gammangwato, failed.

The fate of Jousse is an illustration of both the extent and limitations of the economic role that dikgosi could play. As the manager of the Bechuanaland Trading Association, in 1914 he began complaining in the South African newspapers, as well as to colonial officials, about unfair competition after Kgosi Khama had acquired a controlling interest in the trading firm of Garrett, Smith & Co. Jousse's protests resulted in a consumer boycott that led to his removal from the Bamangwato Reserve. But, Khama was also forced to divest after incurring financial losses as a result of the High Commissioner's investigation into the matter.[26]

For their part, both Rowland and Hirschfeldt were often targets of suspicion and hostility on the part of various colonial officials. Some of this antipathy was a product of racism. Montshiwa Rowland was a "half-caste" who left

local heirs, while Max Hirschfeldt, along with his brother Adolf, married Bakwena.

From 1895 Sebele I annually collected at least £540 in rental and concession fees. He also earned one-pound sterling for each wagonload of timber that was cut out in his Reserve, which as a result of wartime demand resulted in a 1902 windfall of £1,182 being paid into the Bakwena treasury. One-third of the above was retained by the Kgosi himself, while the balance was banked for public purposes as the Bakwena Tribal Fund. Sebele and his successors also earned significant additional income through such tributes as *sehuba*, a share of game products, and *setlako*, payment from returning migrant labourers.[27]

In Kweneng *sehuba* remained a significant royal revenue stream. A 1908 letter by Sebele I to a certain F. Jacobs of Mafikeng shows the former earning £41 from the sale of 284 fox, jackal, and civet skins while offering for sale bundles of ostrich feathers at 10 shillings per lb., and leopard skins, at 30 shillings a piece.[28]

In the 1920s the trade of game products thrived. An informal but lucrative cooperative had by then emerged between the Kgosi and his headmen or *dikgosana*, who collectively retained ultimate control over the hunting of royal game, some 500 part-time kaross sewers, and Raphalane Hirschfeldt. A 1929 colonial report notes that the sewers had produced 17,911 lbs. of karosses valued at £4212. Hirschfeldt in turn exported the finished game products to merchants in North America and Europe. The colonial authorities, who wanted more Bakwena, including Bakgalagadi and Khoe (Basarwa/Bushmen), to be taxed as migrant labourers working in Gauteng, did not appreciate the success of this arrangement, which was accompanied by the enforcement of indigenous conservation measures.

By contrast, the royal 10% Hut Tax commission in Kweneng for 1904 amounted to only £101, reflecting Sebele I's failure to enforce payment for those not in wage labour. For its part, the colonial regime understood Hut Tax itself as a tool to force Batswana into, usually migrant, labour. Within Kweneng this pattern persisted under Sebele I’s son and heir Kgosi Kealeboga Sechele II (1911-18) and grandson Kgosi Sebele II (1918-31), both of whom continued to derive considerable income from commercial interests operating in Kweneng while being accused of neglecting their responsibility to enforce the universal payment of Hut Tax by their subjects.

As a result, after 1922 the colonial regime attempted to appoint independent tax collectors working on a 5% commission. But, by 1930, total Hut Tax collection, including commission payments, still amounted to a modest £3690.[29] Perceptions of royal Bakwena negligence in Hut Tax collection would persist until Sebele II's 1931 banishment to Ghanzi.

Thus, it was that, notwithstanding the 1892 imposition of racist colonial state control over commercial trading in the Native Reserves, dikgosi such as Bathoen, Khama, and Linchwe as well as Sebele continued to use their customary law claims of being the "sovereigns of the soil" to charge rent to non-Africans for the occupation of land and use of other resources in their territories. These powers, as well as their influence over their subjects, allowed them to continue to exert a degree of control over the economic activities of Europeans and Asians in their territories. In this respect, they favoured those who were prepared to work with them.

Black and White Peril

Reports that the Bakwena dikgosi were able to exercise a degree of authority over the non-indigenous traders and artisans who had settled among them, accompanied by what for southern Africa at that time was an unusual degree of social engagement across racial lines, ultimately became a matter of external racist fascination and concern.

Inevitably some traders, like Jousse, looked to the colonial state to protect their interests against assertive dikgosi. This became a source of tension in Molepolole during the reigns of both Sechele II and Sebele II. A few months after his father's death, Sechele II caused a stir when he publicly presented a petition to the visiting Resident Commissioner in the name of the "Bakwena National Council." In it he condemned those traders who paid Bakwena and Bakgalagadi in "goodfors", that is credit coupons redeemable for goods at their shops, rather than cash for local produce. While praising Raphalane Hirschfeldt for always paying in cash and being otherwise fair in his dealings, he stated that those who failed to follow his example should go- "we don't want goodfor shopkeepers but men who can pay us cash".[30] He further castigated those traders who "have secret meetings to fix the prices of our stock" adding "now I shall fix the prices according to my judgment". The Mokwena further stated that all traders who wished to do business in the Kgalagadi would henceforth have to be accompanied by his representatives.

On education, Sechele II noted that he intended to preserve his father's two-shilling levy so that "Bakwena, Bakgalagadi, and Masarwa" children could attend the Bakwena National School free of charge. He also expressed his desire for the establishment of an "Agriculture School" in the Protectorate "where young men would be taught manual labour such as ploughing, irrigation, and dry land farming" adding:

"There are many young men who ought to be taught all these works so that they might become useful to their fellow countrymen. There are many boys going out to the Gold and Diamond Mines instead of which some of them should be taught at home."

In the petition Sechele II also turned his attention to social relations, insisting that "if a white man wishes native women let him marry her legally according to European law". This was a double-edged complaint. On one hand, it was aimed squarely at the exploitation of local women by white male philanderers. On the other hand, he was equally if not more concerned about securing the inheritance rights of children of mixed marriages. A small but significant number of stable interracial marriages continued to exist; despite there being frowned upon by the missionaries as well as by white settler colonial society in general. The Mokwena was motivated by the unfair confiscation of property of the offspring of one such marriage, which had been sanctioned under customary law. As a result, after legal consultations, the imperial authorities in Mafikeng acknowledged that customary law marriages, including those between races, could have legal standing in the civil courts.

To the white South African press Sechele II's words were a challenge to their racist black peril obsessions. The *Diamond Fields Advertiser* (Kimberly) introduced the issue to the reading public with a story headlined "Can Nothing be Done? The White and Black Peril- relations of Trader and Native- Bechuana Chief's Appeal".[31]

This theme was quickly picked up and sensationalised by other South African newspapers. The *Cape Town Argus* under the headline "White Man's Shame" worried that the "problem of miscegenation in Bechuanaland" could not be ignored as it might further contribute to "the awful crimes of lust by savages, which have so profoundly shocked and alarmed South African Society." Noting "the Bechuanaland Protectorate

Imperial government rules despotically" the newspaper called on it to immediately remove all "undesirables".[32]

Newspaper reports further noted with concern that whites were being tried and fined under native law. Press coverage of Sechele II's speech had thus planted the exaggerated image in racist South African minds of his reserve as a disturbing lost world in the Kalahari where whites lived under black rule and otherwise "went native". Both the image and reality of Kweneng as a realm of racial ambiguity would gain far greater cross border prominence during the reign of Sechele II's more militantly Africanist son, Kelebantse Sebele II.

The French Connection

"Although at that time politics and independence were a long way off, we were aware when we returned, that we were different from other people at home. Our behaviour, as we showed the South Africans, was something more than they expected from a Native, more like what was expected among white men." – Stimela Jingoes, Basotho veteran of the South African Native Labour Contingent.[33]

Aged 25 at the time of his 1918 enthronement, Kgosi Sebele II's background was unique among dikgosi of the time. He was fairly well educated, though he had dropped out of secondary school at Tiger Kloof, despite being a good student. Among Bakwena dikgosi, he was the first to be fully literate in English. He had also gained additional experience outside the Protectorate. For several years he worked as a clerk in the Witwatersrand mines and witnessed the squalid and violent conditions of compound life. With the freedom and money to visit bustling Johannesburg, he also moved among a new community of urbanized Africans tasting the pleasures of big city life, while honing his musical talent.[34]

During the First World War, Sebele ended a period of estrangement from his father and uncles when he agreed to lead a contingent of 74 Bakwena volunteers who were among the 555 Protectorate Batswana who served in France between 1916 and 1918 as members of the South African Native Labour Contingent (SANLC). As suggested by its name, the Contingent was conceived by the Pretoria authorities as a labour support unit only. They thus insisted that all black troops under its command should not be issued with firearms. This experience was quite different from that of the Batswana who

later served in the African Pioneer Corps during the Second World War, all of who were armed and many of whom performed frontline combat duties.[35]

As further reflected in such conditions of service as their inferior uniforms, pay, and rations the SANLC were made aware of their separate and unequal status among British Empire Forces. The most resented indignity they endured was their off-duty confinement in camps that had been designed to hold prisoners of war. This restriction arose from white South African hysteria, reflected in numerous press reports, that the black troops would become socially contaminated through contact with French women. A typical example was a correspondent in the *Natal Mercury,* who rhetorically asked: "Should the native have social intercourse with a white woman, what effect will it have on the native mind? To many readers the answer was clear. As Cape's *Die Burger* warned, "cancer of immorality would spread across the breadth and length of South Africa and that our women and children will no longer be safe on their farms.*"*[36]

In the face of such moral consternation, the Union Government's assertion that all of the 21,000 black troops it would ultimately send to France would be housed in closed compounds under the tight control of local white officers failed to fully allay the public's fears, which were embraced by the Dutch Reformed Church and various women's organisations among others.

Despite the strict enforcement of measures designed to keep the SANLC separated from other military units as well as the civilian population, social contact did occur. After months of being confined while off duty in the camps, some Contingent members became militant in their protests. This provided the South African authorities with a pretext to begin to draw down the unit at the beginning of 1918, notwithstanding British military reports commending the SANLC's ongoing contributions to the war effort. The repatriation of the troops from England, where they were transited in open bases was perceived as an additional challenge. After letters were intercepted from some of the troops addressed to females in Devonport, the area's commanding Brigadier-General publicly warned local women that:

"It is absolutely essential that the Kaffir should regard white women as unapproachable; the mischief that can be done by merely good-natured familiarity – apart from anything worse – is incalculable: and people will suffer from this levity on the part of white women at home, are the wives and daughters of our settlers in South Africa."

SANLC Corporal Sebele's own wartime experience included moments infused with cognitive dissonance. On July 10, 1917, he was among a handful of SANLC NCOs, who were selected to meet with King George V and Queen Mary, accompanied by Edward Prince of Wales and General Haig, in Abbeville France. On that occasion, the King had assured the men that:

"You are also part of my great armies fighting for the liberty and freedom of my subjects of all races and creeds throughout the Empire."

Having been paraded as heroes on their arrival and departure from Europe upon their return to Southern Africa, the demobilised SANLC members were officially treated as virtual outcasts, being denied service medals and other forms of recognition. When a decade later the British belatedly took the initiative of issuing medals to its veterans within the High Commission Territories, many of the Bakwena veterans publicly refused to accept them.[37]

White angst over SANLC's return had undoubtedly been further fuelled by its association with the introduction of the 1918 H1N1 Influenza (Spanish Flu) into the region, resulting in a colourblind mortality rate of about 8%. The then emerging Afrikaner Nationalists went so far as to label the pandemic as the *'kaffar-khaki pes'* (khaki kaffir plague). [38]

Sebele II's return from the Western Front coincided with his father Sechele II's death. While on February 12, 1918, the Bakwena celebrated the installation of their new warrior king, the Resident Commissioner in a wire to the High Commissioner cited his SANLC veteran status along with his alleged instability and love for alcohol as grounds for caution, resulting in the recommendation that London withhold formal recognition of his Chieftainship.[39]

The Pianist

"I recall Chief Sebele, who had served in the Native Labour Contingent during the First World War…His house and huts in Molepolole were furnished in European style, and he was very proud of his armoury of many different types of guns and rifles. When he felt in the mood, he played his expensive piano with some feeling. He was certainly a man of temperament and might be regarded as the type of higher-bred native who, willy-nilly, has

been subjected to the white man's civilising process." – Julian Mockford, South African author/journalist.[40]

Following in his father's footsteps, under Sebele II the sale of cattle and grain was regulated. The Kgosi is also said to have intervened in cases where traders were suspected of cheating or accused of offering inferior goods. Like a number of his peers, notwithstanding the precedent of the Jousse Affair, he also used the threat of mobilising a public boycott against offending shopkeepers.[41]

Sebele II's interventions in local trading raised regional eyebrows after he began to actively regulate the predominantly white Afrikaner (Boer/Maburu) and mixed-race blacksmiths in Molepolole. Convinced that the blacksmiths were overcharging, he imposed a set of fees while also requiring them to buy wood for their furnaces from Bakwena. As a conservation measure, he further banned Kweneng residents of all races from commercially cutting green wood, while raising the fees on outsiders engaged in the commercial gathering of deadwood.[42] When Sebele II, like his predecessors, also attempted to introduce price controls on local shops, the matter was taken up by members of the European Advisory Council. In response, the Colonial Regime intervened to modify the prices temporarily upward, but in 1924 the Bakwena defiantly adjusted them down again.

Among the Bakwena, the second Sebele's initiatives were well received. In his biography of the Kgosi, Michael Seboni would recall:[43]

"Whites and Boers ["Makgoa le Maburu"] who were engaged in wagon smithing were refused permission to cut trees without the Kgosi's consent, they were also refused permission to use or sell such logs outside Kweneng. He fixed the prices the smiths could charge for fixing things. Good leaders make it a point to protect their people from being cheated by traders; here Sebele II was displaying good insight by protecting the ignorant buyer from the cheating trader. Sebele II later prohibited smiths from cutting young trees altogether. He fixed new prices that they could charge for their goods and services. Even though he was feared like lighting there was more happiness in his village than many others or the ones we know presently. He believed in the freedom of people and the advancement of the nation."

Some of the rumblings that resulted from Sebele's interventions were picked up by an imaginative reporter while travelling through the country with the

Union [anti-] Locust Expedition.[44] Beyond the heavy presence of South African locust exterminators in the territory, reports of poor Boers or *bywoners* living under the thumb of black Africans in Bechuanaland coincided with the coming to power, in June 1924, of J.B. Hertzog's Afrikaner Nationalist Party, whose policy focus included the economic and social upliftment of white Afrikaners through reinforcement of the colour bar. The new government also loudly called for the transfer of the High Commission Territories into the Union. It is in this context that, by August of 1924, exaggerated accounts of the regulatory impositions faced by Boers in the Bakwena Reserve became the focus of Afrikaans and English South African newspaper stories with such lurid headlines as "White Serfs of a Negro Chief."

In September 1924 the Amsterdam-based *Zuid-Afrika Maanblad*, a monthly journal for the promotion of Netherlands-South Africa cultural and economic relations, was motivated to promise its readers an investigation into the supposed problem of "White Dutch held in slavery in Bechuanaland", who were reported to be the impoverished descendants of Dorsland Trekkers.[45] Two months later, in December 1924, the periodical found racial comfort in the claim that the Dutch slaves were really people of mixed race. They further reported that the "half-neckies" had fled German South West Africa and were making a living as blacksmiths and goods haulers between Molepolole and Gaborone. Despite this somewhat sane if bigoted and less tan fully accurate conclusion, stories of the supposed travails of whites in bondage at Molepolole persisted.

In popular literature as well as the press, Molepolole's Afrikaans community continued to be associated with tragic tales of fallen *Dorsland* trekkers, e.g., from Mockford's "The Trek-Lust of the Boers:"[46]

"Dropped muskets lay scattered about the veld. Men, women, and children staggered vainly from sand dune to sand dune in hope of finding water, became delirious, and wandered madly on until death came as a mercy. The bodies of the victims of that foolhardy trek lay sprawling across the face of the desert. The jackals and the vultures left only gnawed bones to bleach in the blazing sun. 'Yes, a bad business,' said the mourning survivors. And in the months that followed the derelict wagons were consumed by the raging flames of seasonal veld fires...The descendants of the ill-fated party of trekkers are still living in those native villages. For instance, at Molepolole, the royal town of the Bakwena, there is a compact colony of about fifty. The

huts nestle cosily in the hills, and over the surrounding country the Chief of the Crocodiles holds sway."

Hysterical reports about Bechuanaland's supposed Boer serfs continued to circulate in the South African periodicals when an attempt to force a resident white man to respect the local ban against travelling by ox-wagon on a Sunday caused the Resident Magistrate to assert his racial authority. The following correspondence, reproduced below, on the incident gives some insight into the royal temperament that would ultimately result in Sebele II's detention without trial at Ghanzi, as well as the disputed boundaries of racial authority.

Letter by Sebele II, "*Kgosi e kgolo ya Bakwena*," to Captain Stigand, Resident Magistrate at Molepolole, dated April 5, 1926:[47]

"My Friend, I have the wagon here of Mr. W. Horne. It was stopped by my brothers Padi and Waboraro from going about on Sunday; before stopping this wagon, they saw one belonging to those at Mokgopetsane when they came to stop it, they found that it was carrying a sick person, and they left it. Now from there, they saw this wagon of Willie Horne passing, and a boy having the name of Ntu Taukobong was sent to stop it, and he was severely knocked on the top of his eye and made a wound. The boy Ntu came back to my brothers and reported the wound. Four more boys were sent again to stop the same wagon, Kangwane, Mochele, Mochwara-kgole, and Kike. The boy Kike when coming near the wagon spoke to W. Horne to stop the wagon and he stopped it at once. He took out a rifle, those women in the wagon tried to stop him, but he knocked one of them, as he was so wild. When the boys saw the gun they ran away, however, they managed after all to return the wagon at Mokgopetsane and brought it here. My law strictly prohibits wagons going about on Sunday."

Captain Stigand's same-day response to Sebele II:[48]

"My Friend, with regard to your letter this morning concerning the stopping and seizing of Willie Horne's wagon yesterday by boys sent by Padi and Waboraro, I enclose for your information a copy of a statement which Mr. Horne made this morning before Sub-Insp. Knott at this Office. This matter is for <u>me</u>, the Magistrate, to deal with. I shall have to hold an inquiry into the matter, taking the statements of all witnesses to the affair. The Government laws in this Protectorate lay down as follows in Proclamation

of 10th January 1891, Section 10: 'no suit, action, or proceeding whatsoever to which a person of European birth or descent shall be a party, either as plaintiff or complainant or as a defendant or accused person, shall be adjudicated upon by any Native Chief, save by consent of all parties concerned.'

"William Horne comes within this category; he does not pay Hut Tax but pays Poll Tax and like the Dutch and other residents here pays stand rent to the Chief for the stand where his house is...From the statements I have before me, so far, it would appear that Mr. Horne was peacefully travelling on the public road. If it is true that any Bakwena tried to forcibly stop his wagon - that is, not by calmly speaking to him, - but by force - they were totally wrong because he is not one of your people and is doing no harm to anyone or their property by travelling on a public road. After speaking to him any complaint should have been taken to the Chief and he afterward can complain to the Magistrate. If anyone has a bone fide charge of assault against anyone who is not according to the law under your jurisdiction, there is the Magistrates Court. You will please return the seized wagon, donkey, etc. to its owner. As I have stated the case will be gone into by me."

Sebele II responding to Stigand on the above:[49]

"I am surprised by the way you want to take this case; I find that you are quite unfair in it. Let it be quite clear to you that the law prohibiting people from Sunday wagon trekking not only applies to the Bakwena themselves, but to everyone in the Reserve, European, and Non-European. I am not against the Proclamation of the 10th of June 1891, section 10, but I take the proclamation in the way that it refers only to Criminal and Civil cases, not to cases such as this one today. If then you take them in the same way, why should you bring Mrs. Janssen's case to me of the stolen pair of lady's shoes?

"It is the bounden duty of Mr. Horn to come and fetch his wagon not for me to take it to him, it was brought by the boys only to witness that they had done what they had done as they know the law. You have seen the wounded boy Ntu Taukobong and the others; the wounded boy was struck on purpose not accidentally. I am going to see that this is proven to you! The head belongs to the Chief- Tlhogo ke ea Kgosi, deal fairly with this case, the head is mine. I am quite sure that if these boys were drunk as said by Willie, they would have thrashed him; and it seems to me that you quite agree to Mr.

Horne's statement first [without] hearing all the witnesses. I have read your letter to the Councillors, and we came to the conclusion that the day you are going to take this case, say two days previous let me know, I shall come to the case to hear the proceedings, and I will come with them the Bakwena; to come and get from you information as to why should the Bakwena law be taken as nothing, whereas it has been all times kept and carried, not only in our Reserve, but at Gamangwato and Kanye Reserves, they have it, and it applies to all, European and Non-European."

Three days later Stigand's inquiry was held, during which Horne's account of the incident was largely discredited. He subsequently felt compelled to beg the Bakwena for forgiveness. Stigand, nonetheless, warned the Bakwena that whites were not under the kgotla and could not be arrested. The wagon was picked up.

Notwithstanding Stigand's pronouncement, Sebele's informal tribal police *(Batshegetsi-ba-molao)* continued to vigorously counsel erring Europeans about the need to respect local law and custom *(mekwe le melao ya Sekwena).* In the following years, at least three more Boer wagons found their way to Kgosing following separate Sunday incidents. Sebele was nonetheless mindful of the colonial dispensation's racial boundaries.

In his somewhat better-informed, albeit prejudiced, contemporary writings on the condition of poor Boers in Bechuanaland during the interwar era the South African author/journalist Julian Mockford does not refer to slaves or serfs, terms he reserved for describing in some detail the then prevailing exploitation of "Masarwa" in the territory. Of the ambiguities of race and power in Molepolole on the eve of Sebele's banishment he rather observed:[50]

"The descendants of the ill-fated party [i.e., Boer Dorsland Trekkers] are still living in those native villages. For instance, at Molepolole, the royal town of the Bakwena there is a pathetic colony of about fifty. The huts nestle easily in the hills. Over the surrounding country Chief Sebele, the Second holds sway. He is well educated and he and his first wife dress in European clothes and speak English fluently. They play piano with some skill. He dispenses justice in all disputes between his race and it is only when a white man is involved that the magistrate tries the case. In the midst of this happy community, where the Bakwena are allowed to purchase and carry rifles and ammunition, where lessor tribes are in a state of mild serfdom for the

profit of these lords of Molepolole who are rich in cattle, land, and leisure, where game abounds and strong drink is freely brewed, there exist from hand to mouth poor whites."

Mockford went on the further observe

"And so, these descendants of semi-nomadic Boers who trekked adventurously from comparatively settled communities into the great unknown have uselessly settled among People of the Crocodile, whose workmen for intents purposes they have become. By the laws of the country, they [the Boers] are denied pastoral and agricultural privileges. Now they seem to have lost the means or the initiative to clear out and re-establish themselves in a community of their own. They depend for their happiness and livelihood much on the chief. While it pleases him to patronize them, all is well. But when he frons on them, they starve."

Such insights into the subtleties of social-economic leverage exercised by the Bakwena Kgosi are not to be found in the parallel writings of W.J. Makin who as a newspaper correspondent for British *Daily Mail* introduced the legend of the white slaves to an Empire-wide readership under the headline "Black Chief's White Slaves".[51] In the article's opening line, he wondered if there is any more extraordinary story than that of the white slaves of Molepolole? Which he somewhat awkwardly described as "a native kraal ruled by a Chief buried in the desert:" [52]

As a correspondent for the *Daily Mail, Chicago Tribune*, and possibly other periodicals, Makin had volunteered to provide coverage of the 1928 Trans-Kalahari tour by then Imperial Secretary Captain Bede Clifford, which travelled from Mahalapye to Ghanzi through the central Kalahari before proceeding to Ngamiland.[53] In his "White Slaves of Molepolole" article, which was incorporated into his 1929 book about the expedition, Makin echoed popular opinion in linking the Boer presence in Molepolole to the harsh vicissitudes of the Dorsland trek, further reporting that:

"The Boers never left Molepolole. All courage and adventure had dried up in the face of that fierce relentless sun and the wilderness of sand. They stayed in the kraal, clinging to the precarious existence it afforded. There they settled with their women and began to work for the natives. The old native chief died, and his son, Sebele, who had been educated among white people of the south, came to Molepolole to rule the Bakwena. In the

meantime, the Boers had become the serfs of the kraal, the hewers of wood and drawers of water. They are still there, performing menial tasks for the natives.

"You may enter Sebele's kraal and discover a grand piano which he bought in Cape Town and has had transported, by some miraculous means, into this desert home. As a host Sebele is charming. He will play last year's jazz melodies on a piano to amuse you, and, if it is a special occasion, his chief wife will wear an evening frock which was also bought in Cape Town some years ago and the white serfs of Molepolole will serve you with the kaffir beer that is brewed for such distinguished visitors.

"The white serfs feel no humiliation. It is the second generation of those who first entered the desert and they have grown up and lived all their lives in the native kraal…They speak the native language better than they do Dutch, and their outlook and general mentality is that of the native. Yet, they keep their white ancestry in a scrupulous fashion and have not bred with the natives. Their white skin is their one asset, but in the desert kraal, it is merely regarded as a curiosity.

"When they were discovered two years ago by an expedition sent by the Union Government to destroy locust hatchings in the Kalahari, an offer was made to take them back into civilisation. They refused. They are happy in the kraal. And so, they continue to live there, white serfs to a black race."

Public interest in Makin's fantastic story inspired the satirical British magazine *Punch* to compose the following lyrics:[54]

"Though our buried chief is black, we decline to wander back, To the company of whites, and their civilised delights, having utterly lost touch, with the British and the Dutch, but continuing to be wholly, Satisfied with Molepolole!"

Rey's Apartheid

Popular press, as opposed to official, concern about the ambiguities of racial authority in Kweneng faded after Sebele II's removal to Ghanzi, which was accompanied by the colonial regime's 1931 imposition of his brother Kgari Sechele as the Chief in the face of widespread Bakwena protest.[55] The coup

was carried out by Charles Rey, who had been installed as Resident Commissioner in 1930.

Rey's decision that Sebele would have to go was a product of the policy guidelines and personal prejudices. He had been appointed by the then Colonial and Dominions Secretary, Leopold Amery, to straighten out his predecessors' perceived legacy of stagnation. Amery had observed this legacy during a 1927 tour of the High Commission Territories. Believing that its future transfer to South Africa was inevitable, Amery hoped to see Bechuanaland developed as a "centre of progress" that could serve as an imperial counter-weight to the rising tide of Afrikaner nationalism within the Union. Before his departure, Rey had been told by Amery that the past object BP administrators had been "to keep out of the Union, and to keep the natives quiet and happy." Rey was quickly perceived by many Batswana as standing for just the opposite.[56] Following Amery's belief that the Protectorate had suffered under a "very unprogressive form of indirect rule", one of Rey's mandates was to bring about a statutory redefinition of chieftainship. As Rey noted at the time:

"We have to frame rules for the powers of the Chiefs and the jurisdiction of their courts according to the Secretary of State's instructions for all the territory. To do so for the Bakwena as long as Sebele is Chief would be a grotesque farce."[57]

The reports about Sebele's supposed "white slaves" had put some pressure on the colonial regime to end Botswana's reputation as a place where Europeans "went native." This desire to legally uphold racial segregation became an obsession during Rey's tenure as Resident Commissioner. Files were opened on such subjects as "The Miscegenation Problem" and "Undesirable Europeans Living in Native Reserves"; the term "undesirable" being used to refer to whites whose economic status and/or social relations brought them into close association with blacks.[58]

Rey's racial concerns were accompanied by a penchant for removing insubordinate dikgosi. In this respect, Sebele II's banishment was followed by the aborted 1933 removal of the Bangwato regent Tshekedi Khama. The latter incident occurred after the Bangwato regent was accused of flogging a white man, Phineas McIntosh, at his Serowe kgotla. The offence had occurred during a customary court case in which Phineas was accused of assault in a fracas arising from his affair with a Mongwato woman. A former

primary schoolmate of Tshekedi's, Phineas considered himself a member of the Serowe community and at no time complained about the trial proceedings. McIntosh's subsequent staunch refusal to testify against Tshekedi at the colonial inquiry into the matter resulted in his own extra-judicial banishment.

Rey interpreted Tshekedi's trial of McIntosh as a direct challenge to colonial racial authority. Undoubtedly also motivated by the opportunity to rid himself of another troublesome chief, the Resident Commissioner arranged for a naval detachment to be dispatched from Cape Town to Serowe to preside over a suspension ceremony in which Tshekedi and the Bangwato were forced to stand under the sun, with guns trained on them, facing the local white population who were pointedly positioned under a covered dais behind the colonial administrators, police, and marines. The whites of Serowe were, for the most part, embarrassed by the whole exercise.

Public outcry in Britain and the region over Rey's heavy-handed approach to the matter resulted in Tshekedi's swift reinstatement after he had acknowledged that the case should have been addressed by the local Magistrate (who had failed to take up Tshekedi's earlier complaints about McIntosh's behaviour). Although Rey's actions had backfired, the McIntosh incident opened the door to new racist impositions within the Reserves. A letter to the Resident Magistrate at Kanye by the Bangwaketse Kgosi Bathoen II noted:

"It must be born in mind that the Coloured people, even Europeans, are quite agreeable to be tried in Kgotla. With the knowledge of the Administration, the Chief exercised both judicial and administrative jurisdiction over them up to the present time until last year when Chief Tshekedi at Serowe was suspended from the exercise of the functions of his office, merely because he tried a European in Kgotla. The Inquiry found him guilty of "a deliberate and flagrant violation of Protectorate law," even though Phineas McIntosh had no complaint against the Chief's kgotla judgment."

In 1934 Rey proposed to resolve the above conundrum through the "Creation of a Settlement for Coloured People and Poor Whites" along the Molopo as a location for removing such people from the reserves, observing that:

“A settlement should be formed on the Crown lands to which people of this character could be removed. We should not remove forcibly from the native reserves adults now living there. We should, however, prohibit any increase in their numbers by immigration and when their children became of age, they should be told that they would have to go to the new settlement or leave the territory.”

The authorities in London initially welcomed Rey's proposal. But, in the end, his proto-apartheid scheme did not materialize due to legal and financial constraints. He was instead authorised to carry out the more limited objective of imposing residential segregation between blacks, whites, and coloureds at Kanye, as well as Molepolole. In the case of Molepolole, residential segregation by race was enforced as part of the broader forced resettlement of the village in 1937.

Efforts to promote racial segregation in the Bechuanaland Protectorate were supported by successive Union of South Africa governments, whose official concerns about cross-border challenges to the colour bar found detailed expression in a 1939 “Report on the Education of Europeans in the Bechuanaland Protectorate”. Drafted by the Union’s Director of the National Bureau of Educational and Social Research, Dr. E.G. Malherb, the report focused on the supposedly dire consequences of “Race Mixture”. The document expressed particular concern about what it described as the "biological deterioration" of Boers living at Ghanzi and Molepolole. The report further observed:

"Dealing with the question of race mixture first, I feel that the problem should be tackled immediately. I am not referring to isolated cases here or there which seem unavoidable, but have in mind, particularly the situation at Molepolole, where practically the whole European community is involved. The situation there is both serious and difficult. The seriousness lies in the fact that the people with a touch of coloured blood are respectable and on practically the same level as the Europeans."[59]

Indeed, Molepolole’s resident DRC missionary was known to have succumbed to interracial temptation "with one of the girls of his [previous] congregation", while "administering medicines”.

In the same year, Anglo-South African efforts to further tighten racial segregation in Kweneng and elsewhere in the Bechuanaland Protectorate

were overtaken by the outbreak of the Second World War, which coincided with the death in exile of Sebele II.

The Kgosi's passing would ultimately open the door to further racial controversy in the community as his second wife, Susan Sechele (nee Wolf), who had remained with him in Ghanzi and there born him potential heirs came to be viewed by the colonial regime as a "coloured". This was true despite "Mmamoruakgomo" and her family's residence in Tlokweng, where they were fully accepted as Batlokwa tribesmen. Her customary law marriage had been further recognised by the colonial regime and was tacitly accepted by Molepolole's Anglican Church, where their children were baptized.[60] Yet, when Sebele's eldest son, Moruakagomo claimed his father's throne in 1962 with the backing of the majority of Bakwena assembled at the Molepolole kgotla, local opponents played the race card in appealing to the colonial state to block confirmation of his appointment, e.g., Englishman Kgabo:

"Moruakgomo is not the right chief. Firstly, Moruakgomo's mother is a coloured, and her relatives are too – so he cannot rule as he is a coloured. Secondly, one reason for Sebele's expulsion was he married a coloured and our fathers thought it wrong to be ruled by a coloured."[61]

During the Second World War, over ten thousand men from the Bechuanaland were enlisted in the colourblind fight for freedom as espoused in the Atlantic Charter, serving in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. In the eyes of the Dikgosi and many of their subjects, the option of enlisting as fully armed soldiers in the British Army's African Pioneer Corps, rather than serving as unarmed labourers of the South African Native Military Corps, was an assertion of their rejection of white settlers' racial hegemony.

In the aftermath of the war, regional and global focus on the ambiguities of racial authority within Botswana would once more shift from the Bakwena to the Bangwato reserve due to the prolonged crisis arising from Seretse Khama's banishment due to his marriage to Ruth Williams. This development coincided with the reconstituted Nationalist Party's coming to power in South Africa on an overt platform of master race hegemony that would be universally branded as Apartheid.

Conclusion

The transitory appearance of sensational press accounts of whites living under black rule in Molepolole and elsewhere in the Bechuanaland Protectorate during the interwar period are consistent recurring black peril narratives that continue to haunt elements of white society in Southern Africa.

There were of course never any white slaves in Molepolole or anywhere else in colonial Botswana. In this respect, it is not entirely clear to what extent the supposed subjects of the black peril articles, the Bakwena Reserve's actual Boer population in the 1920s, were aware of and actively concerned about how they were being portrayed by outside writers. Oral accounts from their descendants suggest that the image of white servants waiting on Sebele II may have grown out of the Kgosi's practice of using Boer women as caterers to prepare white people's food *("dijo tswa sekgoa"*) when he entertained white guests. In this context, it is not hard to believe that the local vrouws would have been content to volunteer their culinary talents.[62]

After the Second World War some of Molepolole's Afrikaners, along with others across the Protectorate were enticed by the Apartheid regime's outreach to adopt South African citizenship, resulting in a modest cross-border exodus in the 1960s. Others remained.

A bigger question is to what extent the ambiguities of racial authority in colonial Botswana shaped the country's post-colonial vision of building a non-racial political economy as counter-culture to the then neighbouring racist regimes in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), South Africa, and South West Africa (Namibia). This vision was well articulated in April 1958 by the most prominent Motswana victim of black peril hysteria, Seretse Khama, when, shortly after his return from exile, he for the first time attended and rose to speak at a meeting of the Joint Advisory Council, a body then dominated by a handful of dikgosi and white settlers.

As an alternative to the continued threat of the Bechuanaland Protectorate's potential incorporation into the Union of South Africa, some of the dikgosi and their liberal white counterparts had been attracted to the possibility of exploring ties with the supposedly multi-racial Central African Federation. In his remarks before the body, Seretse dismissed the motion, affirming that:

"I think it is time that we ourselves in Bechuanaland, who neither belong to the Union of South Africa nor the Federation, or any other part as far as I can see, except Great Britain, should try to formulate a policy of our own which is probably unique to us. And that is a policy, perhaps, of even teaching those countries who profess to be more advanced than ourselves, that in as far as administration and race relationships they have more to learn from us than we from them. I must say, quite frankly that I have been rather disturbed to find that on the whole there is a tendency to look always over our shoulders. Perhaps I am wrong, if so, I stand corrected. We want to see what is happening elsewhere instead of getting on with what we know is peculiar to us and to the country itself. We should get on and have no fear that we may incur someone's displeasure, as long as what we do is internationally accepted. And if we are right, I am afraid emotion must come into this; we should not bother very much with what anyone might say. We have ample opportunity in this country to teach people how human beings can live together."[63]

Following Seretse's intervention, the JAC motion of entering into talks with the Federation was abandoned.

ENDNOTES

[1] This monograph is a revised version of a series of articles that were initially published in 2000 in the Sunday Tribune (Gaborone) newspaper from August 20 to October 10, 2000. Its text has been edited for continuity and modified with the inclusion of updated references and endnotes.

[2] Makin, W.J. *Across the Kalahari Desert* (London: Arrowsmith, 1929) 22.

[3] The term 'black peril' was initially popularized in the region by the 1904 homonymous article published by George Webb Hardy *The Prince* (Durban) periodical, along with his 1914 novel, see Hale, F. "Racist Attitudes and Prison Reform in George Webb Hardy's The Prince and The Black Peril" in *Natalia* 25 (1995), 26-42; also Cornwall, G. "George Webb Hardy's The Black Peril and the Social Meaning of 'Black Peril' in Early Twentieth-Century South Africa" in the *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 22, No. 3 (1996), 441-453. In recent years there has been renewed interest in black peril themes in Southern Africa among literary critics as well as historians, e.g., Kearny, J.A. *Representing Dissension: Riot Rebellion and Resistance in the South African English Novel,* (UNISA 2003) Chapter 1 online @ https://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/19443/Kearney_JA_1868882047_Section2.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y. Graham, L.V. *State of Peril: Race and Rape in South African Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2012)

[4] For a definitive account of this otherwise often-told tale, see Williams, S. *Colour Bar, The Triumph of Seretse Khama and his Nation* (London: Penguin 2006). In addition to

the dozens of additional historical accounts of Seretse's "Marriage of Inconvenience," it was the inspiration for at least one infamous 1956 black peril novel - *The Tribe That Lost Its Head* along with its 1968 sequel *Richer Than All His Tribe*, whose author, Nicholas Monsarrat, as the UK Information Office Director for South Africa, had been dispatched to Gammangwato on an extended assignment in media management. In the end, Monsarrat's local efforts appear to have mostly benefited the cash flow of the Palapye Hotel's Bar.

[5] For a definitive account of the controversy see Crowder, M. *The Flogging of Phinehas McIntosh, A Tale of Colonial Folly and Injustice, Bechuanaland 1933* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

[6] Long, U. (edit) *The Journals of Elizabeth Lees Price Written in Bechuanaland, South Africa, 1854-1883: With an Epilogue: 1889 and 1900* (London: Edward Arnold, 1956), 389 for school, many other references to the community.

[7] Long, U. (edit) *The Journals of Elizabeth Lees Price,* 417.

[8] Early examples of traders marrying Bakwena included J.H. Wilson, who accompanied Oswell, Livingstone, and Murray to Ngamiland in 1849, and Henry Boyne who was the most prominent late 19th-century Molepolole trader. Twentieth-century examples included Teddie Gower and the Hirschfeldt brothers. Other cases of colonial-era intermarriage included individuals with such local surnames as Jansen, Khan, Kablay, Lottering, and Van Vuren.

[9] Keddy, B. "The Mokgopetsane coloureds and their response to cultural assimilation" (University of Botswana BA Thesis 1985). Additional "Masetedi", who claim Griqua origin, have resided since the second half of the 19th century in Kumakwane.

[10] BPP C.4588 no. 34 "Proposal by Chief Sechele", May 25, 1885.

[11] PRO CO 879/32/392 Loch to Knutsford, July 17, 1890, enclosing legal opinion of W.P. Schreiner, dated June 10, 1890.

[12]Mennell, P. "Bramston, John "in *The Dictionary of Australasian Biography*. (London: Hutchinson & Co 1892).

[13] Public Records Office (PRO) CO (Colonial Office) 417/69, also 879/34/410, "Memorandum as to the Jurisdiction and Administrative Powers of a European State holding Protectorates in Africa" February 1891.

[14] Botswana National Archives (BNA) BNB 976. *Bechuanaland. High Commissioner's proclamations and the more important government notices.* (Pretoria: Govt. Printing and Stationery Office). In this respect, the May 1891 Order-in-Council was further meant to close perceived gaps in the High Commissioner's paramount authority as had been previously proclaimed in the Order-in-Council of June 30, 1890, that had further extended the Protectorate administration's authority over northern Botswana. The title "Tautona" had earlier been applied by some Batswana communities to the Amandebele ruler Mzilikazi. Since 1966 it has served as the Setswana term for the President.

[15] BNA BNB 976. Proclamation 15 of 1907, was retroactively enacted to justify the detention without trial of Sekgoma Letsholathebe. It was up until the 1960s used to detain many Batswana including such notable examples as Seretse and Tshekedi Khama, Molefi Pilane, Gobuamang, John Nswazwi, etc. as Sebele II, whose detention is covered in this text.

[16] This legal reality was at variance with the prevailing myth that the Protectorate was established as a result of the request by local Dikgosi for British protection from the Boers. For the evolution of this still popular myth see Morton, B. and Ramsay J. "The Invention and Perpetuation of Botswana's National Mythology, 1885-1966" online @ https://www.academia.edu/88313990/The_Invention_and_Perpetuation_of_Botswana_s_National_Mythology_1885_1966.

[17] Sir Sidney Godolphin Alexander Shippard served in the dual position as the Administrator of the Crown Colony of British Bechuanaland and the Resident Commissioner of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1885–1895. His close relationship with Rhodes dated back to their time together as a student at Oxford. After leaving office he served as a British South Africa Company Director. His Setswana appellation "Morena Maaka" translates as "The Lord of Lies".

[18] PRO CO 879/37/441 Loch to Colonial Office, November 17, 1892. Kgosi Linchwe I of the Bakgatla baga Kgafela.

[19] National Archives of South Africa (NASA), Cape Town (KAB), Bechuanaland Crown Colony (BCC) 58 (1890) "Prospects of Trouble with Southern Protectorate Chiefs"

[20] BNA 114/1 Surmon to Shippard, February 16, 1892. Botswana National Museum Library, Ellenberger Diary entry February 11, 1892.

[21] BNA 114/1 Shippard to Loch, March 2, 1892.

[22] BNA HC 114/1 Statement by Chief Sebele.

[23] BNA HC 114/1 Shippard to Loch, March 6, 1892, Loch to Knutsford, March 19, 1892.

[24] BNA HC 114/2 High Commissioner Loch, Cape Town, to Colonial Secretary Lord Knutsford, London, 14 June 1892.

[25] BNA HC 1114/2 Loch to Knutsford, June 14, 1892, further containing the minutes of the High Commissioner's interview with Chief Sebele, who was accompanied by Kebokula, Motsatsi, Gaealashwe, and Rev. Williams.

[26] Parson, N. 'Khama & Co.' and the Jousse Trouble, 1910–1916" *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 16, Issue 3, July 1975, 383 – 408 DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853700014328.

[27] BNA Resident Commissioner 12/16, Assistant Commissioner (South) to Resident Commissioner March 31, 1905, on Sources of Chiefly income. BNA S. 290/16-20 on Secheleland Concession, S 261/1/1 on Stand Rents in Kweneng

[28] BNA Sebele Out Correspondence (SOC) Sebele correspondence with Frank Jacobs, June-September 1908.

[29] BNA S 23/6/1 Hut Tax Table

[30] BNA S 43/2, Sechele to Acting Resident Commissioner, September 8, 1911.

[31] BNA 43/2 containing *Diamond Fields Advertiser articles* of September 18, 1911. Als London Missionary Society (LMS) Correspondence Wookey September 18, November 7, and December 14, 1911.

[32] BNA 43/2 *Cape Argus*, September 23, 1911.

[33] Perry, J. & C. (edits.) A Chief is a Chief by the People: The Autobiography of Stimela Jason Jingoes (Oxford University Press, 1975), 92.

[34] Sebele II's troubled reign is covered in greater detail in Ramsay, J. in Chapter 5 of my Ph.D. Thesis "The Rise and Fall of the Bakwena Dynasty of South-Central Botswana, 1820-1940" (Boston University, 1991) 318-393 @

https://www.academia.edu/90978159/Jeff_Ramsay_The_rise_and_fall_of_the_Bakwena_dynasty_of_South_Central_Botswana and Ramsay, J. "The Neo-Traditionalist: Sebele II and the Bakwena" in Morton, F. & Ramsay, J. *Birth of Botswana, A History of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1910 to 1966 (Longman Botswana 1987), 45-63 @* https://www.academia.edu/90979121/The_Birth_of_Botswana_A_History_of_the_Bechuanaland_Protectorate_from_1910_to_1966.

[35] For a general history of the SANLC see Grundlingh, A. (1987). *Fighting Their Own War: South African Blacks and the First World War* (Johannesburg: Raven 1987) Also Willan, B.P. 'The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918' in *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 19, No. 1, World War I and Africa (1978), 61-86. Clothier, N. *Black Valour: The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918 and the sinking of the 'Mendi'* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1987).

[36] Grundlingh, A. *Fighting their Own War*, 46-47.

[37] BNA DC Molepolole 4/11 Resident Magistrate Molepolole to Government Secretary, March 29, 1928.

[38] Phillips, H. *Epidemics: The Story of South Africa's Five Most Lethal Human Diseases*, 68-93. Ramsay, J. "Disease and Dependency in Kweneng, Botswana, 1890-1930" in P. Bala & R. Viljoen(edits) *Discoveries and Disease: Colonial Conquest and Indigenous Communities* (Lexington Books 2023)

[39] BNA S 23/3 Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, February 12, 1918.

[40] Mockford, J. *Seretse Khama and the Bamangwato* (London: Staples Press, 1950), 75.

[41] Interviews with M.P. Pheto (27/8/85), Samson Gower & Mhiemang (28/8/85) Moipise Kemerile (19/9/85) Ratlou Ketsabile (8/10/85) Kebotse Rasila (1/11/85) and S.G. Masimega (13/1/86), as well as scattered references in Seboni, M.O.M. Sebele II (Pretoria, J.L. Van Schaik 1956).

[42] BNA S 261/1/1, Resident Magistrate Molepolole to Assistant Resident Commissioner. March 10, 1930. S 352/9, 15,17 "Undesirable Europeans in Native Reserves" DC Molepolole 2/27 "European School 1918-24" interviews M.P. Pheto (27/8/85), S.G. Masimega (13/1/86) and Ratlou Ketsabile (27/4/87). In interviews with elders the blacksmiths, irrespective of their racial DNA were identified as "Maburu" (Boers) except for one figure from Sebele II's time, remembered "Seakgatlhogo" for the way he moved his head while walking, who was said to have been black American from Alaska! In general, the blacksmith community was also seen as separate from the "Coloured" community located at Mokgopetsane on the outskirts of Molepolole.

[43] Seboni, M.O.M. Sebele II. Quote translated from original Setswana text.

[44] BNA 34/4 Union Locust Expedition. NASA SAB TES 330 F2/203 "Department of Agriculture. Locust Destruction: Expenditure in Connection with Locust Campaigns in Bechuanaland, South West Africa, and The Union: General File (1922-35). LMS Correspondence Bur March 9, 1925.

[45] "Blanke Hollandsche slaven bij een Bechuanenhoofdman." *Zuid-Afrika Maandblad Eerste Jaargang Tusschen Nederland En Zuid-Afrika Voor De Cultureele En Economische Betrekkingen*, Vol. 1, (1924) no. 9 (September), 130-33 and no, 12 (December) 177-78.

[46] Mockford, J. *Khama, King of the Bamangwato* (London Jonathan Cape 1931), Chapter "The Trek-Lust of the Boers", 85 also reproduced in *Seretse Khama and the Bamangwato*, 74.
[47] BNA DC Molepolole 4/16 Sebele II to Resident Magistrate, 5 April 1926. NB the Padi referred to in the letter was the grandfather of the current Bakwena Kgosi Kgari III.
[48] BNA DC Molepolole 4/16 Resident Magistrate to Sebele II, 5 April 1926
[49] BNA DC Molepolole 4/16 Sebele II to Resident Magistrate, April 7, 1926,
[50] Mockford, J. Khama, King of the Bamangwato, 85-86.
[51] Makin, William James (1893-1944) was a UK journalist and author. He gained further fame in the 1930s as a prolific writer of magazine fiction in the genres of horror and science fiction.
[52] "Black Chiefs White Slaves" clipping from the July 14, 1928 edition of *The Overseas Daily Mail* in BNA 43/7 "Slave Trade, Slavery and similar conditions. Reprinted from *The Daily Mail*, July 11, 1928.
[53] Clifford, B.E.H. *A Journey by Motor Lorry from Mahalapye through the Kalahari Desert* (London, Royal Geographic Society 1929). Additional correspondence in BNA DC Molepolole 5/18
[54] Punch, or The London Charivari, July 18, 1928, 79.
[55] Ramsay, J. "The Fall and Decline of the Bakwena Monarchy" in *Botswana Notes and Records* Vol. 28 (1996), 65-86.
[56] Parsons, N. & Crowder, M. (edits) *Sir Charles Rey Monarch of all I Survey, The Bechuanaland Diaries 1929-37* (Lillian Barber -New York, James Curry - London, and Botswana Society -Gaborone) xvii-xxii, BPP Cmd.8707: Basutoland, The Becuanaland Protectorate, and Swaziland, History of discussions with the Union of South Africa 1909-1939 (HMSO, London 1952).
[57] BNA S 122/3 "Report by Resident Commissioner on Chief Sebele II of the Bakwena tribe" August 1, 1930; also, BNA S 353/13 Rey: "Secrete Memorandum" March 1931; BNA S 49/7 "Practice in Native Courts, 1925-29".
[58] BNA S 352/9-18 "Undesirable Europeans in Native Reserves (with S 352/9,15 & 17 being specific to Molepolole), S 242/5-8 "Miscegenation", S 298/2-3 "Immorality Law for B.P., Proposed Proclamation."
[59] BNA S 144/17 "Malherb Report" 12.
[60] Ramsay, J. "The Fall and Decline of the Bakwena Monarchy" citing: BNA S 21017 RM Molepolole to ARC, March 9, 1931. S 225/4 RC to HC, June 13, 1931. S 225/12 ADC Gaberones to GS, November 15, 1939; Minute by Cairnes to Legal Advisor, November 29, 1939; S 225/14 DC Ghanzi (Cairnes) to GS, October 19, 1937and to Mrs Susan Sebele II, October 18, 1938. S 238/10 Joyce (DC Molepolole) to Forsythe Thompson, January 9, 1939. DC Ghanzi 2/13, ADC Gaberones to DC Molepolole, January 26,1940.65 Baptism Register for 1940 at St Paul's Anglican Church, Molepolole.
[61] BNA S 177/1 Minutes of the Molepolole Kgotla, October 18, 1962
[62] Here I am grateful for the insights of Fred Jansen of Molepolole in Personal Communication, December 1, 2022.
[63] BNA Joint Advisory Council, Minutes of the 7th Session, April 1958, 87. For background Ramsay, J. "The Twentieth-century antecedents of decolonizing nationalism

in Botswana" Chapter 6, 101-117, in Edge, W.A. and Lekorwe, M.H. (edits) *Botswana Politics and Society* (Pretoria: Van Schaik 1998)